

1-1-2015

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3 to PhD: An Example of Effective Collaboration

Kevin Matheny



An essay contribution to
Conversation 2015

Participant Bio



Kevin Matheny

Executive VP and Chief Development Officer,
for Concordia University

While my professional career began as a teacher and administrator in secondary education, I have had the experience of working in all phases of resource development since joining the field in 1986. I have also written extensively on the subjects of CEO leadership in the development program and strategic visioning and planning for the development effort.

I am currently Executive Vice President, Chief Development Officer for Concordia University.

I hold a Master of Arts degree in Philanthropy and Development from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota. I have been designated as a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE).

Formerly, I most immediately served as President and Chief Executive Officer for the Oregon Independent College Foundation from 2007 – 2010. From 2003 – 2007 I served as Regional Director for Foundation Services for the Providence Health System in Oregon. During 2004, I served as Director for the *Providence Together* campaign, a \$74 million fundraising effort. From 1999 – 2004, I was Executive Director of Providence Child Center Foundation of Portland.

During my tenure as Associate Vice President for University Relations at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, I was responsible for the direction of the corporate and foundation relations and planned giving programs. I have played a major leadership role in several highly successful multi-million dollar capital campaigns.



3 to PhD: An Example of Effective Collaboration

Kevin Matheny

What are the vital characteristics of effective collaboration and how can they become the norm rather than the exception? Why is concerted action a much more difficult path for organizations?

The vision: A safer, healthier, more educated community and a scalable model for community wellness and educational transformation

3 to PhD is grounded in the premise that education can be the driver for widespread community transformation. Education plays an indisputable role in helping people achieve economic stability and become engaged and contributing citizens. It is linked not only to greater economic success, but also to improved health and wellbeing, employment, and longevity, creating a virtuous cycle in which better-educated people are healthier, safer, and more economically stable—benefits which can accrue to future generations and extend throughout communities.

The community surrounding Northeast Portland’s Faubion School is ground zero for our efforts.

Scattered across North and Northeast Portland in the largest catchment area of any Portland K-8 school, many of Faubion’s families live in pockets of concentrated poverty and relative isolation in a community that lacks a defining central hub. Faubion School serves one of the most diverse student bodies—and also one of the most vulnerable. With a child poverty rate nearly 10% higher than the district-wide average, and with 81% of students eligible for free or reduced-price school lunches, many families struggle to provide for their children’s most basic needs. Nearly 20% of students are estimated to be homeless, and many more live in public housing and mobile home parks.

In response to the challenges confronting Faubion’s children and their families, 3 to PhD will establish a corridor of opportunity in the Faubion School neighborhood, using education as the fulcrum point for improving the health and economic opportunity of the wider neighborhood.

Comprehensive in its reach, 3 to PhD aims to provide a seamless continuum of supports for children that foster equity and promote their success and wellbeing from 3 (first 3 trimesters) to PhD (pursuing one’s highest dream).

Conversation 2015

Growing from a longstanding partnership between Concordia University and Faubion School, 3 to PhD is achieving collective impact by aligning best-in-class efforts by Portland-area organizations in a sustained, vibrant partnership. 3 to PhD is building collective expertise in service delivery of early childhood development, physical and behavioral health, STEM, arts, and literacy, with confirmed partners such as Trillium Family Services, Portland Public Schools, Caldera, and Pacific Foods.

The initiative weaves together three strands of activities that aim to address the school, family, and community factors that are essential to ensure children's success and wellbeing:

1. Transformed teaching and learning: Establishing a more rigorous curriculum and related teaching practices that prepare students for success in college and career, infusing literacy, arts and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) proficiency and supporting 21st century skill development through experiential, project-based, problem-focused learning opportunities.
2. Wraparound wellness supports: Braiding together early childhood supports and education, access to nutritious food, family support, physical and mental health, and wellness services to ensure that children and families are safe, healthy, well-nourished and ready to learn.
3. Teacher development: Offering a clinical training model, where teacher candidates have extended field-based learning experiences that prepare them to work effectively with diverse and low-income students, and are introduced to state-of-the-art curriculum and pedagogy, while veteran teachers continue to deepen their effectiveness and work in close partnership with university faculty to develop innovative lessons and instructional strategies.

3 to PhD will be anchored in the redesigned Faubion School/Concordia University College of Education facility, which will feature a community wellness center and an early childhood center, as well as classrooms and 21st century learning spaces for Faubion's PreK-8 students and Concordia's undergraduate and graduate education students. The facility will house services and activities that promote the well-being of children and families while also serving as an innovation hub for transforming curriculum and pedagogy for high quality urban education.

The facility will be developed through a partnership between Portland Public Schools and Concordia.

Of the \$43 million construction costs, Portland Public Schools will fund \$27.5 million through the school construction bond, paying for the redesign of the core K-8 learning spaces. Concordia will invest \$15.5 million to fund the College of Education facilities as well

as the community wellness center, the early childhood learning spaces, and enhanced K-8 learning spaces.

3 to PhD is grounded in the premise that education can be the driver for widespread community transformation. Education plays an indisputable role in helping people achieve economic stability and become engaged and contributing citizens. It is linked not only to greater economic success, but also to improved health and wellbeing, employment, avoidance of criminal activity, and longevity, creating a virtuous cycle in which better-educated people are healthier, safer, and more economically stable—benefits which can accrue to future generations and extend throughout communities.¹

Postsecondary education or training has become the gateway for achieving economic success and social wellbeing as the economic returns of education have risen in recent decades. Lifetime earnings for a bachelor's degree holder are now 84% higher than those for someone with only a high school degree, and people with some college but no degree can earn 59% more over their lifetime than high school dropouts.² In fact, by 2020, 65% of all U.S. jobs are projected to require education and/or training beyond a high school degree³ (a fact underlying Oregon's recently adopted 40-40-20 goals).

Mastering traditional academic subjects will not be enough, however. Due to structural changes in the economy arising from technological progress and globalization, schools must expand their sights well beyond the “3 Rs” to ensure that children develop “21st century skills” that enable them to acquire the jobs of the future and to surmount the complex challenges our society will face. As University of Oregon researcher David Conley has demonstrated, academic content knowledge is only one of the keys to college and career readiness; students also must develop cognitive strategies, learning skills and techniques, and transition knowledge and skills.⁴ Few schools have instructional programs focused on developing these skills—skills that include communication, creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.⁵

¹ Sean Reardon, “The Widening Academic Achievement Gap between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations” in R. Murnane & G. Duncan (Eds.), *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality and the Uncertain Life Chances of Low-Income Children*. (Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2011)

² Anthony Carnevale, *The College Payoff* (2011, <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/ctg48m85ftqm7q1vex8y>)

³ Anthony Carnevale, *Recovery 2020: Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020* (2013, <https://georgetown.app.box.com/s/paen12ypvidnmcyocuzlm>); Anthony Carnevale and Donna Desrochers, “Benefits and Barriers to College for Low-Income Adults,” in *Low-Income Adults in Profile: Improving Lives Through Higher Education* (American Council on Education, 2004), http://www.nassgap.org/library/docs/2004_improving_lives.pdf

⁴ David Conley, “The Four Keys to College and Career Readiness,” Educational Policy Improvement Center, <https://www.epiconline.org/issues/college-career-readiness/the-solution/>

⁵ Partnership for 21st Century Skills, *Framework for 21st Century Learning*, <http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework>; Tony Wagner, *From The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach The New Survival Skills Our Children Need—And What We Can Do About It* (Basic Books, 2008); National Research Council, *Education for Life and Work*, 2012, http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13398

Oregon has struggled to respond to these changing realities. Statewide, postsecondary attainment levels are low: about 15% of adults have not completed high school, 26% have only a high school diploma, 34% have completed an Associate's degree or some college, and 25 % have a Bachelor's or graduate degree.⁶ Far too many students are failing to earn even a high school degree: In Portland, only 67% of students graduate from high school on time—one of the lowest graduation rates in the country.⁷ The rates are still lower for low-income students (58%) and children of color (57% for Latino and 53% for African American students). We face an urgent need to redesign our educational systems to ensure that all students can meet these rising expectations and be well-prepared for productive and meaningful adult lives.

While education is a key that unlocks brighter futures, it can only be accessed when students are healthy, supported, and safe so they are prepared to learn. School systems must determine how to overcome the many barriers that can impede the educational success of low-income children and children of color. Indeed, research suggests that non-school factors—most of them impacted by living in poverty—account for nearly two-thirds of the variation in student achievement differences. Family structure and behaviors, food insecurity, parental unemployment, lack of health insurance, exposure to toxins, and lack of access to quality child care are all barriers that impact children's attendance and learning at school.⁸

These factors contribute to significant disparities in achievement that are present when children enter Kindergarten and that widen over their school careers—gaps that are best seen as “opportunity gaps” because they stem from the disparities in support and opportunities available to low-income and culturally diverse children at every step along the way.⁹

In Multnomah County, where the child poverty rate has climbed to 23%, leaders are piloting comprehensive initiatives—including Cradle to Career, I Have a Dream, Schools Uniting Neighborhoods, and Early Works—to close opportunity gaps and improve student outcomes by counteracting the effects of poverty. These initiatives are grounded in the premise that children must come to school regularly ready to learn. As many as a quarter of Oregon's students were chronically absent in the 2009-10 school year, missing 10% or more

⁶ Raising the Bar for PreK-20 Education in Oregon: 6 White Papers, Oregon Education Roundtable, 2011, <http://www.orbusinesscouncil.org/documents/6WhitePapers.RaisingtheBar.pdf>

⁷ “Oregon graduation rate barely budes, but most metro districts make big gains” (The Oregonian, February 6, 2014) http://www.oregonlive.com/education/index.ssf/2014/02/oregon_graduation_rate_barely.html; Oregon Department of Education, *Cohort Media File, 2012-13*, <http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?id=2644>

⁸ Richard J. Coley and Bruce Baker, Educational Testing Service, *Poverty and Education: Finding the Way Forward*, 2013 http://www.ets.org/s/research/pdf/poverty_and_education_report.pdf

⁹ H. Richard Milner IV, “Rethinking Achievement Gap Talk in Urban Education,” *Urban Education* 2013 48: 3, <http://uex.sagepub.com/content/48/1/3>

of the school year.¹⁰ Also, students must be healthy, safe, and well-nourished, and they and their families need support in overcoming the stressors of poverty. To equip them for success, we must work with families to recognize and leverage the social and cultural capital they possess, to engage them as vital partners, and to remove barriers to their ability to access supports and to build their own skills through training and education.¹¹

In order to raise the educational attainment of all students, we also must prepare and support teachers who are skilled at helping children meet rising academic standards and develop 21st century skills. Research shows that teachers are the most important in-school factor that impacts student achievement.¹² As economist Richard Murnane summarized, “The gulf between those who thrive and those who struggle financially is increasingly driven by a gulf in skills. And these skill differences are influenced by variation in the quality of K-12 education—variation that depends heavily on the quality of teachers in the nation’s classrooms.”¹³

Teachers need support in developing new teaching strategies to foster 21st skills—skills that were not emphasized in traditional instructional models.¹⁴ Employers and researchers are expressing an urgent cry for teachers to deepen STEM learning (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and to help students develop the critical thinking, collaboration, and communication skills that are becoming the entry ticket for secure employment in the changing economy.¹⁵

In particular, we need to grow the number of teachers who are prepared to educate culturally diverse and low-income students. Too often, the students who most need highly qualified teachers are the least likely to have them:¹⁶ urban schools are challenged to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers,¹⁷ and there is a large and growing need for teachers who are effective at raising achievement for students from culturally diverse

¹⁰ Melanie Hart Buehler, John Tapogna and Hedy N. Chang, *Why Being In School Matters: Chronic Absenteeism in Oregon Public Schools*, June 2012,

http://www.econw.com/media/ap_files/ECONorthwest_Publication_Absenteeism-Oregon-Research-Brief_2012.pdf

¹¹ Heather Weiss et al., *Reframing Family Involvement in Education: Supporting Families to Support Educational Equity* (A Research Initiative of the Campaign for Educational Equity, Columbia University Teachers College, 2009).

¹² Rand Corporation, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/corporate_pubs/2012/RAND_CP693z1-2012-09.pdf

¹³ Richard Murnane and Jennifer L. Steele, “What Is the Problem? The Challenge of Providing Effective Teachers for All Children,” *The Future of Children* (Vol. 17, No. 1, Spring 2007),

http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/17_01_02.pdf

¹⁴ Rand Corporation, *Teaching and Learning 21st Century Skills: Lessons from the Learning Sciences*, 2012,

<http://asiasociety.org/files/rand-0512report.pdf>

¹⁵ Curriculum 21: Essential Education for a Changing World, ed. H. Hayes Jacobs (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2010)

¹⁶ Teaching Inequality: How Poor and Minority Students Are Shortchanged on Teacher Quality, Heather G. Peske and Kati Haycock (Education Trust, 2006) <http://www.edtrust.org/sites/edtrust.org/files/publications/files/TQReportJune2006.pdf>

¹⁷ Brian A. Jacob, “The Challenges of Staffing Urban Schools with Highly Effective Teachers,” *The Future of Children* (Vol. 17, No. 1, Spring 2007), http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/17_01_07.pdf

backgrounds—and for effective teachers of color in particular.¹⁸ While Portland students have grown steadily more culturally diverse (roughly 45% of Portland Public Schools students are now children of color), most teachers (approximately 80%) continue to come from middle class, Caucasian backgrounds.¹⁹

This gap heightens the need to expand the diversity of the teaching force and also to develop educators skilled in culturally responsive teaching practices, in which teachers engage the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. This transcends cultural competence, notes researcher Geneva Gay: “In addition to acquiring a knowledge base about ethnic and cultural diversity, teachers need to learn how to convert it into culturally responsive curriculum designs and instructional strategies.”²⁰

In short, helping all children attain the education that allows them to pursue their highest dreams requires a “both-and” approach. Clearly we must address the out-of-school factors that impede children’s achievement in order to overcome racial disparities and the challenges of poverty. At the same time we must reinforce the teaching and curriculum they receive in school. And all of this must be done against a backdrop of rising standards and a more competitive future workplace, recognizing that students must master a wider range of skills and achieve higher levels of proficiency to be successful wage-earners and problem-solvers in their adult lives.

The Faubion School neighborhood embodies many of these challenges and opportunities. With the largest PreK-8 school catchment area in Portland Public Schools, the Faubion School boundary includes students living at the tip of the St. Johns Peninsula on the west, at the western edge of the Portland Airport on the east, and on Hayden Island and along Marine Drive to the north. Some children must ride the bus more than an hour to attend school each day.

Many Faubion families live in more sparsely populated neighborhoods with a low density of health and human services providers, recreational opportunities and such basic amenities as grocery stores. Many Faubion students and their families live in poverty: of roughly 500 students, 81% qualify for free or reduced lunch, 25% live in low-income public housing or trailer parks, and while more than 74 students have been identified as homeless (living in a car, a shelter, a motel, multigenerational housing due to income or temporarily

¹⁸ Richard Murnane and Jennifer L. Steele, “What Is the Problem? The Challenge of Providing Effective Teachers for All Children,” http://futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/17_01_02.pdf

¹⁹ Oregon Department of Education, *Portland Public Schools Accountability Report Card, 2012-13*

²⁰ Geneva Gay, “Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching,” *Journal of Teacher Education*, (Vol. 53, No. 2, March/April 2002), http://mrc.spps.org/uploads/preparing_for_crt_geneva_gay-2.pdf; see also Sonia Nieto, “Schools for the New Majority: The Role of Teacher Education in Hard Times,” *The New Educator*, (Vol. 1, No.1, March 2005), <http://www.sonianieto.com/OLD/PDF/Schools%20for%20a%20New%20Majority.pdf>

staying with someone), the school administration estimates the actual number is closer to 100.

Faubion enrolls one of the district's most diverse student populations, with a school profile including:

- 32% African American, 29% Caucasian, 27% Hispanic students, 10% Multi-ethnic, and 3% Asian;
- 20% of students speak English as a second language.

The Coalition for a Livable Future's Regional Equity Atlas illustrates several troubling indicators for neighborhoods in the Faubion boundaries, including: higher rates of low birth weight babies, lower rates of 1st trimester prenatal care and well-child visits, and higher levels of adult obesity and incidence of diabetes.

Through exceptional principal/teacher collaboration and the Faubion/Concordia University partnership, Faubion students are now making meaningful academic progress. Today, Faubion

School is rated above average compared to other Oregon elementary schools with similar demographics, yet Faubion students remain educationally vulnerable, a fact that shows up at every step along their educational journey:

- Only 41% of entering Kindergarten students participated in PreK, Head Start, or Early Intervention
- 54% of 3rd graders are reading on grade level; 42% are meeting standards in math
- 46% of 6th graders are meeting reading standards; 41% are meeting math standards
- 71% of 8th graders are meeting reading standards; 66% are meeting math standards
- The performance of low-income, limited English-proficient, and minority children lags that of their peers by substantial margins—although performance for English learners and Special
- Education-identified children has grown at a faster rate over the last two years than that of all other groups.

Additionally, many children struggle as they continue into high school. An analysis by Faubion's administration suggested that nearly a fifth of Faubion students dropped out of high school during the ninth grade. A separate district analysis suggested that high school graduation rates in the past two school years for former Faubion students were 52% and 60%, respectively. It's only the most recent class of ninth graders who can report 100% high

school retention – a fact Faubion leadership attributes to the CU/Faubion Launch Pad initiative during their eighth grade.

Faubion’s children face many of the challenges of poverty both at home and in their community. In order to boost their educational trajectory, we must address the many home and community conditions that are obstacles to their wellbeing and learning, while also providing focused instructional strategies and supports that will help them achieve at the highest levels.

Census data²¹ highlights several particular areas of community need in the Faubion neighborhood:

- While overall poverty rates in the Faubion catchment area are fairly comparable or even lower than the wider Portland Public Schools or Multnomah County levels, poverty rates among children are much higher.
- Faubion families with young children have the highest rates of poverty, implying a particular need for publicly-supported early childhood programs.
- Families headed by single females experience much higher levels of poverty in Faubion, even compared with other female-headed households across Portland Public Schools. More than
- 1/3 of the households with children in Faubion neighborhood are headed by a single mother.
- 10% of the housing stock in Faubion catchment area are mobile homes. These communities appear to represent pockets of concentrated poverty.

In summary, the Faubion catchment area is a large and widely scattered community where there are deep pockets of community need and no natural community hubs. In response, we are creating “community by other means,” demonstrating how to authentically create a community for a geographically diffused set of residents. This approach to meeting their needs is unique; it acknowledges and aims to overcome the isolation of residents in a part of the city that is frequently overlooked. In many ways, this approach parallels the medical home model that is currently guiding health care reform in Oregon, providing a “community home” in areas that don’t have naturally occurring community hubs or easily accessed webs of support.

Throughout the planning process, we have identified potential risks that could undermine the success of the initiative. The scope and complexity of this project introduces several unique challenges. Financial risk is inherent in this venture, and we are addressing contingencies in our capital planning and cash flow forecasting. A second area of risk

²¹ American Community Survey 2012

concerns the partner relations; we are addressing those through the governance agreement and a partnership framework that delineates partner expectations and decision-making processes. A third area of risk is being addressed in the architectural design and operations planning: how to balance the high level of security needed for a public elementary school with maintaining an open and welcoming community center and postsecondary learning space.

However, the most fundamental risk may arise as an unintended consequence of success: the risk that the project could trigger a wave of gentrification to the detriment of the families we aim to serve. The core commitment at the heart of the initiative is to improve life outcomes for the children and families of the Faubion neighborhood, and to support them in overcoming challenges and barriers that are exacerbated by poverty. However, this aspiration will be undermined if a wave of higher income families is attracted by the compelling new school, displacing the families we intended to serve. Northeast Portland has a long and recurring history of gentrification, and we are mindful of the significant risk that this initiative could unintentionally contribute to that process. That would represent a profound setback against the mission of the initiative; also, it would present financial risks by undermining its eligibility for some of the planned financing mechanisms. This concern is widely shared among the partners, and we are undertaking several steps to mitigate this risk.

First, we are conducting an equity analysis through which we will engage community leaders for help predicting unintended consequences and identifying solutions to preserve the affordability and character of the neighborhood. Additionally, the governance agreement will address the need for Portland Public Schools to ensure that attendance boundaries and enrollment/transfer processes will ensure that Faubion is available to the children and families with greatest need.

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